

Highways & Local Programs Division

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Fall 2008

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SAFETEA-LU Reauthorization Workgroup

At the end of September, 2009, SAFETEA-LU will expire. The Office of Financial Management (OFM) Budget and the Governor Policy staff convened a SAFETEA-LU Reauthorization Workgroup that included a broad representation of state transportation interests. The Reauthorization Workgroup will provide input to the Governor and the chairs of the House and Senate Transportation Committees to inform and assist the state's Congressional delegation in the reauthorization deliberations. The workgroup decided to focus on the ten areas that were identified by the National Surface Transportation policy and Revenue Study Commission.

These ten areas include Rebuilding America, Freight, Metropolitan Mobility, Safety, Rural connectivity, Intercity Passenger Rail, Environmental Stewardship, Energy Security, Federal Lands, and Research.

This workgroup has written draft policy papers on most topics and have explored possible positions for Washington State. In general, the papers stress more program flexibility in order to fund programs and a need for performance based outcomes. Allyson Cummings of OFM will be staffing this group for the next meeting scheduled December 3rd.

Additionally, national APWA has recently launched their Reinvesting in America's Transportation System micro site at: reinvestintransportation.apwa.net. This site's tool kit is designed as a resource for information and outreach concerning the future of our surface transportation system. Resources include a video, brochures, issue briefs, and several templates for communicating with Congressional members and media.

FFY 2009 Allocations

On September 30, 2008, the President signed the continuing resolution which provides funds to continue operations of the Federal Government through March 6, 2009. The continuing resolution provides six months of funding at the FFY 08 level.

Once WSDOT receives notification by FHWA of the final funding amount for FFY 2009, allocations will be distributed to the Metropolitan Planning Organizations and county lead agencies. For planning purposes for 2010-2012, please assume FFY 2006 levels.

Federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) Regional Project Selection Summary Report

As a reminder, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and county regions who receive federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality fund allocations are required to submit an updated STP Regional Project Selection Report to WSDOT, H&LP by November 1, 2008. A copy of the 2007 completed report can be found at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/localprograms>.

Local Agency Guidelines (LAG) Manual Update

The fall update to the Local Agency Guidelines (LAG) Manual was completed and distributed in October. The following were some key modifications:

- *Environmental Classification Summary*
In response to input from local agencies and FHWA, staff at H&LP recently completed the first comprehensive revision to the Environmental Classification Summary (ECS) form in six years. These changes focused on improving the clarity of questions and providing better guidance on the level of documentation required to support conclusions. As a result of the revisions, the ECS should prove very helpful in making decisions on whether discipline reports will or will not be necessary to fulfill the requirements of NEPA. The expectation is that the revised form will not only assist local agencies to reduce the cost of preparing environmental documents, but will help cut timelines for getting projects through the NEPA process. Another excellent way to assure that NEPA documents get scoped appropriately is to involve H&LP in project “kickoff” meetings. This fall, H&LP is conducting local agency and consultant training around the state to facilitate a seamless transition to using the new ECS form. All NEPA

submittals received after January 1, 2009 will be required to be completed using the new ECS form.

- *Project Authorizations and Agreements*
Due to changes in the federal regulations beginning November 1, 2008, local agency project authorization requests will need to include a documented cost estimate that supports a new phase request (preliminary engineering, right of way, construction) and/or an increase or decrease of funding to a phase. Requests for obligation of funds for preliminary engineering will require the agency to put together an engineer’s estimate for the design phase, beyond the project prospectus. Also, when an increase or decrease of funding is justified, be sure to provide an updated engineer’s estimate. Additionally, construction authorization will no longer be authorized until a Disadvantage Business Enterprises (DBE) goal has been set.

- *Billing*
FHWA is now requiring the date that the project first incurred expenditures to be included with the first request for reimbursement.

- *Indirect Cost Rate Proposals*
For the past several years, H&LP has been approving local agency Indirect Cost Rate Proposals when an agency is applying that rate to a federal project. After many discussions this past year with the State Auditor’s Office, it has been determined that H&LP will no longer approve these plans. They will be examined by the State Auditor’s Office when completing an agency’s audit. Local agencies must continue to develop and maintain all documentation utilized when developing their Indirect Cost Rate Proposals for examination by the State Auditor’s Office.

FHWA Evaluation of ESA - No Effect Determinations

In 1999, FHWA formally delegated to WSDOT the authority for making No Effect determinations for ESA consultations on federal aid highway projects. Within WSDOT, the responsibility for making No Effect Determinations on local agency projects falls to H&LP's environmental staff. This past summer, FHWA completed the first review of the No Effect Determinations made by WSDOT. The purpose of the review was to assess the adequacy of the ESA No Effect documentation for federal-aid highway projects. A secondary purpose was to determine if there was a difference in the quality of the documentation between local agency and WSDOT projects.

This review included 15 state and 15 local agency projects. The review concluded that the No Effect call was the right decision for all but one of the 15 H&LP projects reviewed. The issue that raised questions was the fact that the project included placement of rock at the Ordinary High Water mark. Four of the 15 H&LP projects were judged to be over-documented. FHWA's report on the evaluation made several recommendations for changes to the Environmental Classification Summary form to assure that appropriate documentation is included in project files. H&LP has just completed a revision to the ECS form and LAG, Chapter 24 that address FHWA's recommendations.

Recycled Asphalt Pavement (RAP)

As requested in the state's legislative budget, WSDOT, in partnership with the Department of Ecology, County Road Administration Board, Transportation Improvement Board, and the Association of Washington Cities formed a team that will be developing model procedures to maximize the use of Recycled Asphalt Pavement (RAP) on road construction and preservation projects. During the first meeting, it was agreed that a survey of the local agencies and the asphalt industry would help identify where potential use increases might be made, as well as a strategy that could be developed.

The survey was deployed and the response was enthusiastic. Over 30 percent of the agencies and 39 percent of the asphalt suppliers responded, giving us a clear understanding of the current level of RAP use within the state and areas of use that can increase. Based on the responses, the group has decided on some recommendations and a rough draft of the report for the legislature has been written. The final report is due to the Joint Transportation Committee on December 1, 2008.

Updates on 2008 Calls for Projects

For additional information about any of these updates, please visit the H&LP webpage at:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/localprograms>.

Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Invitational Call for Projects

The HSIP is intended to be strategically invested in projects that reduce the number of fatal and serious crashes on our transportation system. This year, H&LP received 72 applications for a total of more than \$28.5 million, with approximately \$21 million available. Notifications to agencies that have been awarded grant funds are expected in January 2009.

Applications are currently being reviewed for their effectiveness in reducing the fatal and serious injury collisions that have been identified in project locations. Once potential projects that could be funded have been identified, site visits will be conducted to the proposed project locations to verify details (and to gain final WSDOT concurrence for projects on state routes). The analysis is done in accordance with the Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) and will focus on projects that reduce fatal and serious injury collisions.

Federal Bridge Program

The purpose of this program is to improve the conditions of bridges through replacement, rehabilitation, and preservation. This year, H&LP received 42 applications totaling approximately \$227 million, with only \$30 million available. Notifications to agencies that have been awarded grant funds are expected late December 2008.

In July and August 2008, the applications were prioritized and onsite reviews were conducted to normalize all the bridge condition NBIS codes, and to collect any additional data needed to perform a final prioritization of the applications. This information will be presented to the Bridge Replacement Advisory Committee (BRAC) on November 4, 2008.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Grants

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Program was established to address the nearly 400 statewide fatal and injury collisions involving pedestrians and bicycles each year. These safety-focused projects may also support increased mobility and access.

This year, H&LP received 92 applications totaling \$35 million, with approximately \$7 million available. Initial notifications to agencies that have been awarded grant funds are expected by December, with final notification subject to Legislative action during the 2009 session.

Safe Routes to Schools Grants

The purpose of the Safe Routes to Schools Program is to increase the number of children walking and biking to school safely. Eligible projects include three elements; engineering improvements, education/encouragement efforts, and enforcement efforts.

This year, H&LP received 112 applications totaling approximately \$47 million, with approximately \$4 million available. Initial notification to agencies that have been awarded grant funds is expected by December, with final notification subject to Legislative approval during the 2009 session.

2008-2027 State Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Walkways Plan Adoption

With assistance and advisement from a Steering Committee and a State Agency Advisory Team, WSDOT has updated Washington's Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Walkways Plan for 2008-27.

To view the plan or request a CD, visit WSDOT's website at:

www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/bike_plan.htm

What is in the Plan?

Using current information and data, WSDOT identified more than \$1.6 billion in unfunded bicycle and pedestrian improvements statewide.

In addition to identifying infrastructure needs, this Plan sets a statewide goal of decreasing collisions by five percent per year for the next 20 years, while doubling the amount of biking and walking. The Plan also establishes objectives and performance measures in each of the State's five transportation policy areas (as established in state law, RCW 47.01.012):

New policies are needed to reach our goals

There are several ongoing efforts and new initiatives that WSDOT should pursue, including:

- Increased coordination with local and regional agencies, transit providers, and developers to identify additional funding for transportation projects not yet in design or construction;

- Strengthening WSDOT's manuals and guidelines, including the Design Manual, Scoping Guidance, and Traffic Operations Manual, by incorporating more direction related to improving conditions for bicycling and walking;
- Initiation of a new training program for all transportation engineers that includes a focus on bicycle and pedestrian design and grants;
- Creation of a technical advisory group made up of topic experts to help WSDOT resolve bicycle and pedestrian policy questions; and
- Continued partnership with the State Agency Committee representatives from state agencies and organizations playing a role in improving conditions for bicycling and walking.

Washington Named #1 Bicycle Friendly State

Citing our state's bicycle policies, facilities, and programs, the League of American Bicyclists has named Washington as the nation's number one "Bicycle Friendly State." This award, the first ever to be given to an entire state, was announced during the National Pro Bike – Pro Walk Conference in Seattle during the month of September.

The Bicycle Friendly State Program is a recognition program that ranks a state's bike-friendliness and recognizes states that actively support bicycling as a way of addressing climate change, traffic congestion, obesity, and high fuel prices. States are rated based on their encouragement of bicycling through legislation, policies and programs, education and encouragement, places to ride, and planning.

New Developments in the Climate Change Discussion for the State of Washington

In February 2007, Governor Gregoire signed an executive order

[http://www.governor.wa.gov/execorders/eo_07-02.pdf] establishing goals for reductions in climate pollution, increases in jobs, and reductions in expenditures on imported fuel. This statewide effort will address climate change, grow the clean energy economy, and move Washington toward energy independence.

The executive order directs the Washington Departments of Ecology and Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) to lead “[Washington Climate Challenge](#),” a process that will engage business, community, and environmental leaders over the next year. Washington Climate Challenge will consider the full range of policies and strategies that may be adopted to achieve the goals established by Governor Gregoire.

This process is currently underway with a Climate Action Team formed to lead the effort. There are several working groups reporting to the team charged with developing policies and strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, as well as methods for measurement. WSDOT is participating in the Transportation Working Group with several other agencies at the state and local level that are developing information and recommendations in several areas such as Compact and Transit Oriented Development, Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure Improvements, System Pricing, and several others. Local agencies will play an important role in implementation of climate change reduction strategies in any scenario. For additional information about this process and how you can contribute, visit the website:

http://www.ecy.wa.gov/climatechange/2008CAT_overview.htm.

Moving Washington

Washington Depends on Mobility

Effective transportation is critical to maintaining our economy, environment and quality of life. “*Moving Washington*” is WSDOT’s vision of investments and priorities for the next ten years. It integrates new capacity, efficiencies, and commute options to address congestion head-on and improve the performance of our state’s transportation system. The program’s primary objective is mobility, one of the state Legislature’s five transportation priorities along with preserving our transportation infrastructure, making the system safe for all, ensuring environmental sustainability and practicing sound stewardship.

The Program

This balanced, integrated program includes three strategies to address traffic congestion and mobility in our urban corridors and across the state. The three strategies of *Moving Washington* include:

- Adding capacity strategically to best use limited resources by targeting the most congested areas
- Operating efficiently to get the most use out of the roads and infrastructure we have
- Managing demand by offering more commute choices

The Return

The *Moving Washington* 10-year transportation program will improve current traffic conditions and prepare our system for heightened demands in the future. The return on our investment could:

- Improve travel times by 10% in our urban corridors
- Reduce collisions by 25%
- Improve trip reliability by 10%
- Offer more choices for more commuters in our metro areas

2008 Awards of Excellence Awarded to Local Agency Projects

This annual awards program is a collaborative effort between WSDOT H&LP and FHWA to formally recognize FHWA funded local agency projects that have achieved excellence in safety enhancements, construction, innovative design, environmental compatibility, and public involvement, and satisfaction. They represent the “best of the best” community projects throughout Washington.

Best City Award

Shoreline’s Aurora Corridor and Interurban Bridges: This project redesigned and redeveloped one mile of Aurora Avenue North to improve transportation and safety for all modes of travel. Improvements included a pedestrian bridge, sidewalks, transit lanes, business access, and the conversion of a two-way left-turn lane into a left-turn and U-turn lane with a raised median. The award recognizes the City’s successful coordination with the many businesses and community involved with this project.

Best County Award

Cowlitz County’s Lexington Bridge: The new \$15 million I-5/SR 411, Lexington Bridge opened to traffic ahead of schedule and under budget. The bridge provides a faster way for Cowlitz County residents to reach I-5 from the SR 411, Westside Highway. Collaboration between Cowlitz County and WSDOT were essential in obtaining funding for this project, as well as completing it well ahead of schedule.

Best Special Award

Mountains to Sound Greenway & City of Snoqualmie, Snoqualmie Point View

Park: This project provided a scenic viewpoint of the dramatic native landscape and information to the public regarding the history of the region and the conservation successes that have been protected along the Interstate 90 corridor. The project also restored the vegetation and natural character of the site. The final construction costs of \$1.3 million were well under the 2002 estimate of \$1.6 million.

Director’s Award

Asotin County’s Rural Two Lane Safety Project: This project installed guardrail and limited shoulder widening covering over seven miles of needed safety improvements on Asotin Creek and Cloverland Roads. This project was chosen for the award due to the County’s quick response in developing a low-cost, executable safety project.

H&LP Staff Update

Aaron Butters as H&LP’s new Engineering Services Manager. In the 24 years Aaron has worked at WSDOT, he has held positions in Design, Construction Administration, Planning, and Programming at the region and statewide levels. In Aaron’s most recent assignment in the Headquarters Construction office and Urban Corridors he was responsible for development of contracting and management methods for large highway construction projects, participating in design/build policy development, and development of legislation relevant to contracting.

Ian Macek as the new Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, Ian comes from the City of Seattle where he served as staff to the City’s Design Commission. He brings skills and expertise in bicycle, pedestrian, and ADA facility planning, design, and operations.

For More Information

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